Reprinted from Road & Track
June, 1984

DE TOMASO PANTERA GT5

Good Old-Fashioned Excitement!

CYNICISM COMES EASY. Here's the Pantera GT5, literally fresh off the truck, direct from Toledo, Ohio. It's the latest in a not terribly successful series of Panteras, themselves descended from a car that was too much art for the human body to tolerate. The GT5 has an air of facelift about it and the thin little lines, to hide the tucks and seams, don't.

But then the engine spins, catches and barks into life, the deep staccato of the classic cast iron V-8. The fat tires squeal and the tail moves to the right. Through the gears as the booming V-8 returns the listeners to the wonderful days of the real Cam-Am, the real Trans-am, the V-8 specials from when road racing was at airports, two generations of top fuel and funny car, the best misspent youth we ever enjoyed.

Perhaps after all we have something here.

How the GT5 arrived in the U.S., never mind coming to Firebird International Raceway, Phoenix, Arizona, from Toledo, is in itself a saga.

Begin with the De Tomaso Mangusta. The incredible Alessandro (sic) built an enthusiast's dream, a reliably powerful Ford V-8 installed in a show-stopping Italian body, the whole thing with mid-engine/ transaxle just like racing cars.

To see a Mangusta suddenly in your rearview mirror was to disbelieve your eyes. It didn't seem possible that a 2-place, road-legal car could be that low, that sleek and streamlined.

Possible, it was; livable, it wasn't. The contortions needed to get into the car, steer, shift and reach the controls meant the Mangusta could never be more than a display piece; lovely to look at, painful to drive.

However, Ford was in the market for an exotic product to import, so Ford and De Tomaso did a deal. The same basic package, enlarged and modified and rearranged, even restyled some. The result was the Pantera, with Ford V-8, Ghia body...and some problems of its own. Ford hadn't anticipated the De Tomaso eccentricities of production, the Italians hadn't realized the new customers expected simply to climb in and drive around. The first examples had electrical gremlins, inferior rust protection,

ineffective air conditioning and inadequate engine cooling. Worse, this was in the early Seventies, when the manufacturers had plenty on their plates in the form of emissions and safety rules, economy drives, inflation and a near disappearance of the market for high performance cars.

So the partners parted with a certain coolness on both sides. As the owners and shops and suppliers learned more about the machines, though, Panteras became appreciated.

One of the Pantera's fans was (and obviously still is) George Stauffer, a Wisconsin business man. He's a competitor in SCCA Showroom Stock and vintage road racing -- in a Ford GT40; that is, he's a **successful** businessman. Stauffer has had various Jaguars, Cobras, etc. He bought an early Pantera, liked it and was persuaded to sell it for a profit, bought another and gradually became an expert.

Meanwhile, De Tomaso moved on to other projects but has been running off small batches of Panteras. Not for the U.S. though; the final terms of the Ford dissolution prevents direct sales. Instead, there have been firms bringing them in by ones and twos, and others rebuilding older examples.

Stauffer decided the car was good enough to be imported and sold direct. Sort of direct, anyway. He formed a company (Stauffer Classics Ltd., 10967 Division Street, Blue Mounds, Wis. 53517) and arranged to buy Panteras from De Tomaso's Belgian distributor.

The model run is limited, which is to say, small, approximately 50 cars per year. They are to be built to U.S. specs, though this is where things really get indirect: The classic American V-8 used for the car is known here as the Cleveland 351, because that's where it used to be built. (Ford's other 351 V-8 was the Windsor, as built in Canada.)

The 1984 Cleveland 351, though, is build by Ford in Australia, where the wide open spaces make the bulletproof, understressed V-8 a good thing. Ford's Australian branch then exports the engine to other markets, Europe for one, in high performance form. In this case the engine comes to the U.S. in a completion of the circle.

The ready-for-registration 1984 Pantera comes only as the model known as the GT5. The designation comes from the FIA's Group 5, a racing class of several years ago that let you take a production car, modify the engine and body panels and then use any wheels and tires that could be stuffed inside the extended fenders and wheel wells. Group 5 had a distinct look, seen at Le Mans and your neighborhood professional rally and was a natural choice when a factory wanted to update (or tart up, depending on one's esthetic preference) a body that had been around for a few years.

The GT5's new bodywork begins with a full front air dam incorporating an intake scoop for the front-mounted oil cooler. The fiberglass then flares up and over the front wheel wells, down and below the doorsills and up and over again for the rear wheels. Plus, there's a small wing spanning the buttresses behind the roof and a large wing on the engine lid.

The big wing is optional, bringing up the question of function. Earlier Panteras had no problem with the rear getting light at speed, even in their time as Le Mans racers.

But. The tow from Toledo to Phoenix established that the workers in gas stations and fast food franchises across the land believe as one that 1) any car with such a wing is a Lamborghini, and 2) every car with such an appendage will do at least 300 mph. Would Burt

Reynolds lie to us? The big wing serves a purpose, albeit more for marketing than zooming down the straight in a straight line.

What the bodywork mostly does is provide a home for large wheels and tires, just as the FIA had in mind. The original Pantera came with 7-in. rims in front, 8-in. in back. The competition GTS version had riveted lips on the wheel wells and the rims were 8-in. and 10-in. The GT5's more elaborate extensions allow 10-in and 13-in., with larger tires, 285/40VR-15 front, 345/35VR-15 rear.

The 1984 GT5 comes with a choice of engine tune. Standard is rated at 300 bhp, with an optional 350-bhp version achieved by the time-honored substitution of a more radical camshaft, a larger (600-cfm) 4-barrel carburetor and high compression ratio. This last comes from swapping cylinder heads with quench-inducing (and smaller) combustion chambers for the standard heads with open chambers.

The GT5 you see here and the data presented in this test are representative of what the actual as-delivered 350-bhp production GT5 will do. They are not strictly production or strictly our format, though.

Stauffer is just getting started on this project and he isn't a home handyman. He has contracted for the mechanical and legal work. He's also concerned lest the enthusiast market not know about the return of the Pantera as a certified car.

This particular Pantera was built in 1983, as a standard sold-in-Europe GT5 model. It was brought into the U.S. then given the optional 350-bhp engine. The car has appeared in auto shows and thus is part demonstrator, part show car.

The work was done by Kirk Evans, of Auto Exotica, 1369 N. Shoop Ave., Wauseon, Ohio 43567; 419 337-5872. The car was available for test only between shows, and the time fell neatly into the exact frame when the CART racers had rented every track in California to prepare for Long Beach.

So it was agreed that Evans and our Jim Brokaw would haul the GT5, nonstop through snow and ice, 2000 miles at an average of 54 mph, as it worked out, from Evans' Toledo shop to Firebird International Raceway.

Those TV ads in which the prospective buyer is assured that, although he won't humiliate drivers of lesser machines, he could, hit a responsive chord for most of us. We do believe the exotic, high-priced car should be able to outperform lesser machines, even if we secretly know we aren't Burt Reynolds or even Mario Andretti.

With this philosophy in mind, we can observe that the GT5 is quick. Times like 0-60 mph in 5.5 seconds, the standing quarter mile in 14.0 sec with a trap speed of 99.5 mph are beaten, make that edged, only by the Ferrari 512 Berlinetta Boxer (5.1 sec., 13.5 sec and 100.5 mph) and Porsche 930 Turbo (5.0 sec, 13.7 sec and 106.5 mph). The GT5 in turn edges the Porsche 911 Carrera, Lamborghini Countach S, Ferrari 308 Quattrovalvole, etc. and no other car in recent times even comes close.

Two additional points here. First, the GT5 isn't just a quick car by today's (diluted) standards. Even in the late Sixties, when every American factory had at least one model capable of running at the drags in less than 15 sec. only the really radical, as in Dodge Hemi Charger or big-block Corvette or Cobra, could do a flat 14. The GT5 is one of the quickest cars ever sold to the public, ever.

Second, it's so easy. There are rewards in winding exotic, multi-valve little powerplants to their high-pitched maximums, and similar rewards from feeling a turbo come on boost and transform the

mundane sedan engine into something worthy of the name engine.

With the Pantera GT5, you rev the engine off idle, leap off the clutch and onto the gas, the rear tires spin for a few feet and you're away like a rocket. It's a long and complicated path from the gated gearshift to the ZF transaxle, so shifts are made with deliberation but even so, it's a wonderfully solid boot in the back, no brutality, no breakage. Just as our fathers told us, there's no substitute for cubic inches.

True, our GT5's final drive was a relatively short 4.22:1 and this no doubt aided and abetted that magnificent acceleration. A taller 4.01:1 is available, but we'll keep the 4.22, thanks. The GT5 may redline at a measly 137 mph -- but it can do so right now, not after a couple miles of **Autobahn**. We used the tach's 5900-rpm redline in our testing, only to learn later from George that the 350-bhp version is completely comfortable going to 6400. This gives a theoretical maximum of 149 mph and, come to think of it, you'd also get there quicker shifting at 6400.

Brake performance was also impressive, the big brakes and the big tire footprints working well here. The rears were a bit sensitive to premature locking, however; we guess the front/rear bias wasn't adjusted after the tires and wheels were chosen, so the fronts had a relatively easy time. Even so, they hauled the GT5 down in fine style. 143 ft from 60 mph and 258 ft from 80. Brake fade was nil.

Firebird's dragstrip feels like a less aggressive surface than those of our usual venues, which could have affected the braking distances and the slalom results. The GT5 had a faster salalom speed on its wider tires than we saw with the ealier GTS (62.4 versus 61.4 mph), but the newer car isn't in the current top 10, never mind losing to the Boxer, the Countach, the SVO Mustang and the Honda Civic CRX.

That's not quite fair, that last. Width and length, y'know, make a difference when you're threading between cones.

More to the point, De Tomaso has done an excellent job making the suspension match the rest of the GT5's character.

The GT5 is tuned for fairly strong understeer under power. A wise choice, for there's a lot of heavy machinery behind you and you'd like it to stay there. Lifing off brings the tail out, but not too far out and not too quickly. The GT5 can be driven fast and in control with no surprises in store, for instance, when you need to brake for a corner sharper than it looked. The front gets light with full power in the turn, and lifting, braking and getting your foot back down will induce classic and controllable oversteer.

The GT5 doesn't turn in as well or as sharply as the Boxer or Countach. There's compliance built into the Pantera's suspension and the edge isn't as crisp. Instead, the blunter edge means the less than professional will have plenty of information and warning as to where that bulky powertrain actually is. The GT5 is less delicate to drive really quickly, and that's hard to fault.

This compliance (the car's built-in early warning system) also serves the GT5's purposes. It is a motorcar to be driven. In normal use, normal traffic and roads, it has that distinctive taut jiggle of a suspension reacting to a fraction of the loadings with which it can cope. But the ride is more firm than punishing. Steering effort is high at low and parking speeds; see references to big, fat tires. Clutch effort is also high, as well it might be with all that torque passing through.

De Tomaso has come a long way

since the Mangusta. The GT5 displayed zero temperament. Even all-out laps around the road course with air conditioning on didn't raise the water temperature beyond 170 degrees Fahrenheit. The seats were not uncomfortable and heads didn't hit the roof; one man even wore a cap during the test.

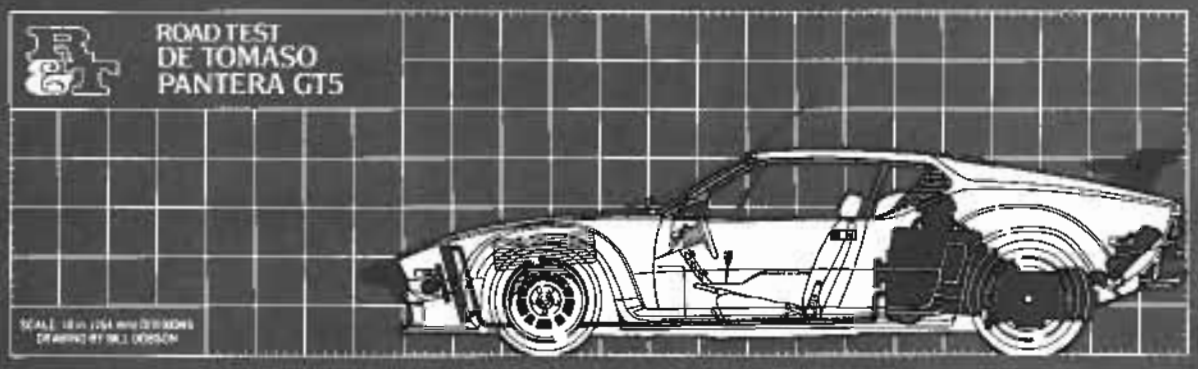
This isn't to say the Pantera is the ideal car for extended family vacations or trips to the store. The ignition switch is awkwardly placed just below and too close to the isntrument panel, the parking brake lever snugs up against what would be the transmission tunnel if the gearbox wasn't in the trunk, and getting in is a matter of bending over, folding up, plumping down and extending arms and legs. And the pedals are off set to the right of the seat and steering wheel.

All part of the exotic car class, as is the front stowage compartment filled with spare tire and the bin behind the engine for some of what would otherwise go in the trunk. It's not as though the lucky few who can afford a car like the GT5 can't afford a Toyota pickup or Chrysler wagon for running errands.

The high-rent district represented here makes its own rules. Stauffer expects the GT5's natural competition to be the Lotus Turbo Esprit and the Ferrari 308, both of which are more exotic and more imported, so to speak. What the GT5 has to offer is more performance.

And the classic sound of that Ford V-8 following a red streak as it dwindles into the middle distance.

ROAD TEST
DE TOMASO PANTERA GT5



PRICE

List price, FOB Chicago	$55,000
Price as tested	$58,500

Price as tested includes std equip. (air cond, elect. window lifts, AM/FM stereo/cassette), 350-bhp engine ($2000), rear wing ($1500)

IMPORTER

Stauffer Classics Ltd, 19057 Division St, Blue Mounds, Wis. 53517

GENERAL

Curb weight, lb/kg	est 3250	1475
Test weight	est 3500	1589
Weight dist (with driver), f/r, %		40/60
Wheelbase, in./mm	98.8	2510
Track, front/rear	59.4/62.2	1510/1580
Length	168.1	4270
Width	77.6	1970
Height	41.6	1057
Ground clearance	3.4	86
Overhang, f/r	38.7/30.6	983/777
Trunk space, cu ft/liters	4.0	113
Fuel capacity, U.S. gal./liters	21.1	80

ACCOMMODATION

Seating capacity, persons		2
Head room, in./mm	35.5	902
Seat width	2 x 20.0	2 x 508
Seatback adjustment, deg		0

ENGINE

Type	ohv V-8
Bore x stroke, in./mm	4.00 x 3.50 .. 101.6 x 89.0
Displacement, cu in./cc	351 5763
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Bhp @ rpm, SAE net/kW	350/261 @ 6000
Equivalent mph / km/h	139/224
Torque @ rpm, lb-ft/Nm	333/452 @ 3800
Equivalent mph / km/h	87/140
Carburetion	one Holley (4V)
Fuel requirement	leaded, 95-oct

DRIVETRAIN

Transmission	ZF 5-sp manual
Gear ratios: 5th (0.70)	2.95:1
4th (0.85)	3.59:1
3rd (1.04)	4.39:1
2nd (1.47)	6.20:1
1st (2.23)	9.41:1
Final drive ratio	4.22:1

INSTRUMENTATION

Instruments: 300-km/h speedometer, 8000-rpm tach, 99,999 odo, 999.9 trip odo, oil press., coolant temp, ammeter, fuel level

Warning lights: oil press., alternator, low fuel, vent fan on, headlights, high beam, directionals

CHASSIS & BODY

Layout	longitudinal mid engine/rear drive
Body/frame	unit steel
Brake system	11.2-in (284-mm) vented discs front, 11.1-in. (282-mm) vented discs rear; vacuum asst
Swept area, sq in./sq cm	na
Wheels	Campagnolo cast alloy; 15 x 10 front, 15 x 13 rear
Tires	Pirelli P7, 285/40VR-15 front, 345/35VR-15 rear
Steering type	rack & pinion
Overall ratio	18.8:1
Turns, lock-to-lock	3.4
Turning circle, ft/m	39.4 ..... 12.0

Front suspension: unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

Rear suspension: unequal-length A-arms, coil springs, tube shocks, anti-roll bar

MAINTENANCE

Service intervals, mi:	
Oil/filter change	5000/5000
Chassis lube	none
Tuneup	10,000
Warranty, mo/mi	to be determined

CALCULATED DATA

Lb/bhp (test weight)	10.0
Mph/1000 rpm (5th gear)	22.4
Engine revs/mi (60 mph)	2680
Piston travel, ft/mi	1563
R&T steering index	1.34
Brake swept area, sq in./ton	na

ROAD TEST RESULTS

ACCELERATION

Time to distance, sec:

0–100 ft	2.9
0–500 ft	7.9
0–1320 ft (¼ mi)	14.0
Speed at end of ¼ mi, mph	99.5

Time to speed, sec:

0–30 mph	2.1
0–50 mph	4.3
0–60 mph	5.5
0–70 mph	7.2
0–80 mph	9.1
0–100 mph	14.1

SPEEDS IN GEARS

5th gear (5900 rpm)	137
4th (5900)	112
3rd (5900)	97
2nd (5900)	69
1st (5900)	45

FUEL ECONOMY

Normal driving, mpg ..... est 10.0

HANDLING

Lateral accel, 100-ft radius, g	na
Speed thru 700-ft slalom, mph	62.4

BRAKES

Minimum stopping distances, ft:

From 60 mph	143
From 80 mph	258
Control in panic stop	very good
Pedal effort for 0.5g stop, lb	27

Fade: percent increase in pedal effort to maintain 0.5g deceleration in 6 stops from 60 mph ..... nil

Overall brake rating ..... very good

INTERIOR NOISE

Idle in neutral, dBA	74
Maximum, 1st gear	90
Constant 30 mph	77
50 mph	80
70 mph	84

ACCELERATION